

School-to-Nature



Skunk

Skunks can be spotted on all Caledonia Conservancy lands, and around our neighborhoods as well. A skunk is a medium-sized mammal, ranging in size from just over a pound to 14 pounds. A pet skunk can live for 15 years, but the life span in the wild is about 3 years. Males are called bucks, females are does, and baby skunks are called kits. In this area, kits are born in May and June; kits remain with their mother for several months until they can forage on their own.

The Skunk is omnivorous, so it eats eat pretty much anything. It is mostly nocturnal, foraging for fruit, juicy plants, insects, larvae, worms, eggs, small reptiles or mammals, grubs, and fish—and human and pet food and garbage, if it is left outside. A skunk may attack a bee hive, not for the honey, but to eat the bees. Because of its varied food tastes, a skunk can live almost anywhere. The Skunk's range is from .77 to 1.5 miles. Most make their homes in hollow logs, brush piles, and have even been known to live in abandoned buildings.

The Skunks is best known for its smelly, oily spray which comes from the anal gland. Skunks have poor vision, but great senses of smell and hearing, so it can hit a target 10 feet away. A skunk can run 10 miles an hour if it has to, but it prefers to amble slowly. Their main predator is the Great Horned Owl. The owl does not have a sense of smell, therefore is not bothered by the skunk's obnoxious spray. Skunks also fall prey to dogs, coyotes, wolves, and are hit by cars. TIP: If you are a dog owner and your dog goes out at night, you may want to keep a few large cans of tomato juice handy to use for bathing your dog, as that neutralizes the skunk's spray.

Skunks are attracted to human homes by bird feeding seed, pet food, garbage, grills, or even a pile of lumber or branches to use as a den. Openings under sheds, decks, and houses attract skunks. To keep a skunk away, try scents that skunks hate: mothballs, or cotton balls soaked with citrus, ammonia, or predator (dog) urine; but be careful with these around small children and other pets.

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